New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1957

Volume XVIII, Number 5 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of February 18, 1957

1957 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres in Other Years

Original Reviews Appeared In These Volumes

1956 Vol.

Stage Play	*Page*
Apple Cart (The)	258
*Auntie Mame	229
*Bells Are Ringing	182
Candide	176
Girls of Summer	197
Good Woman of Setzuan (The)	161
*Happiest Millionaire (The)	193
*Happy Hunting	166
*Li'l Abner	202
*Long Day's Journey Into Night	217
Macbeth	237
*Major Barbara	233
*Middle of the Night	370
*Mr. Wonderful	339
*Most Happy Fella (The)	308
*My Fair Lady	345
Reluctant Debutante (The)	269
Richard II	253
Romeo and Juliet	250
Saint Joan	285
*Separate Tables	246
Speaking of Murder	157
Troilus and Cressida	149
*Uncle Willie	154

1955 Vol.

*Damn Yankees	310
*Diary of Anne Frank (The)	257
*Inherit the Wind	322
Matchmaker (The)	194
*No Time for Sergeants	238

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 18, 1957*

1957 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres During 1957

Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	*Page*
Christophe Colomb	369
Clearing in the Woods (A)	393
Eugenia	366
Feu la Mere de Madame	351
*Hidden River (The)	378
*Holiday for Lovers	342
Intermezzo	345
Measure for Measure	381
Misanthrope (Le)	359
Nuits de la Colere (Les)	351
*Potting Shed (The)	372
Small War on Murray Hill	397
*Tunnel of Love (The)	347
*Visit to a Small Planet (A)	356
Volpone	361
Waiting for Godot	385
*Waltz of the Toreadors' (The)	390

Theatre Openings

"Intermezzo" "Holiday for Lovers"
"The Tunnel of Love" "Feu la Mere de Madame"
"Les Nuits de la Colere"

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 18, 1957*

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

All Reviews copyrighted by the newspapers and reproduced by permission.

Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, Inc., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"Holiday for Lovers"

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

February 15, 1957

'Holiday for Lovers' a Well Made Routine Comedy for Don Ameche

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Ronald Alexander's "Holiday for Lovers," which was produced by Shepard Traube at the Longacre last evening, is an absolutely perfect comedy . . . of its kind. In this one, the corn is really as high as a elephant's eye, and I haven't seen so much type strewn around since a bemused printer shoved a page form onto the composing room floor in Denver 39 years ago.

Alexander is the dramatist who confected "Time Out for Ginger" a few years ago—a comedy which kept audiences howling and Melvyn Douglas from acting for two solid years. I predict that this new one will follow the same course and prevent Don Ameche from taking useful employment until the middle of 1959.

The Haddocks Again

In the very early 1920s Donald Ogden Stewart convulsed my generation—which could fall into a fit with little provocation—by writing two books, "Mr. and Mrs. Haddock Abroad" and "Mr. and Mrs. Haddock in Paris." "Holiday for Lovers" could easily be titled "Mr. and Mrs. Haddock in Spades."

Don Ameche is a well-heeled and small-souled insurance man from Minneapolis who has swept his wife, Carmen Mathews, and their daughter, Sandra Church, into a grand tour of Europe. They hit New York to wait for the boat and all the right situations happen to them, like too much luggage.

They hit Paris and the right things happen again, like Ameche not knowing French but Miss Mathews finding somebody at Christian Dior's who knows English. And Miss Church, a fetching little dish, falls in love with a poor American abstract painter, Thomas Carlin.

All On Schedule

Well, right on the travel agent's schedule they hit Seville, where Ameche gets sick at a bullfight and Miss Mathews discovers a little shop called Balenciaga. Just like Mr. and Mrs. Haddock and their daughter Mildred, the Ameche family keeps running into old but crass friends—in this case, Audrey Christie and George Mathews.

Their lives are further complicated, if complicated isn't too strong a word, by picking up another daughter who has been studying music in Europe long enough to be married secretly to a French pianist. They traipse through Rome and on back to Paris, hell bent.

Ah, quelle vie! The audience ate up the jokes last evening. It ate up Ameche's very pleasant performance as a self-important family head. It gorged itself on the gaucheries of Miss Christie and Mathews. It goggled at the gowns afforded Miss Mathews by Helene Pons. It lounged in the very good lush settings by John Robert Lloyd.

So far as I could tell, all of the audience, including my wife, left the Longacre in a happy glow—except me. I had to miss two taxicabs while stopping to pick the corn out of my teeth.

"HOLIDAY FOR LOVERS"

Comedy in two acts and five scenes by Ronald Alexander; staged by Shepard Traube; setting and lighting by John Robert Lloyd; costumes by Helen Pons; presented by Mr. Traube at the Longacre Theatre, February 14, 1957. The cast:

Mary Dean.... Carmen Mathews
Robert Dean..... Don Ameche
Betsy Dean..... Sandra Church
Connie McDougal.. Audrey Christie
Joe McDougal.... George Mathews
Maid..... Denise Dorin
Margaret Dean..... Ann Flood
Paul Gattalin..... Thomas Carlin
Henri Berchat..... Rene Paul

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

February 15, 1957

THEATER

'Holiday for Lovers'

By WALTER F. KERR

WELL, there's a surprise a minute at the Longacre. In the first scene, a family who are getting ready to sail for Europe have a great deal of trouble packing their suitcases. When Don Ameche finally jams a lid right down on his thumb and howls in pain, wifey Carmen Matthews asks:

"Does it hurt, dear?"

"Only when I laugh," snarls Don.

In the second scene (Paris), everybody has a great deal of trouble with the French language. Daddy strangles as he tries to work out a sentence ("Don't—vous—?") and mommy pops in brightly from a visit to Christian Dior's to announce:

"Oh, the concierge just told me the cutest story!"

"What was it?"

"I don't know. It was in French."

In the same scene we are dazzled to learn that tourists sometimes have trouble with French taxicabs, and that painters who paint in Paris often paint abstractions. As somebody says, staring at one such abstraction:

"It's miraculous. It has line, color, spirit. What is it?"

In the third scene (Spain), we discover that an American who has been so enamored of bull-fighting all his life that he has never been able to pass a butcher-shop without shouting "Ole!" is reduced to a greenish pallor, and frequent gropings in the direction of his stomach, the minute he is exposed to the "real thing." We also have further trouble with the native tongue. It seems that, in Spanish, the "c" in a word is often pronounced "th." This disturbs father, as he hears a young fellow rattling the stuff off:

"Does he always lisp like that?"

• • •

The fourth scene, if you still want to come, takes place in Rome, where the males are so vigorous that one character has "seen guys make passes at female birds—in flight." Somewhere along in here—these fast trips are always a blur—we are also introduced to that coffee known as 'espresso.' Somewhere along in here, too, playwright Ronald Alexander decides that he has bequeathed us quite enough fresh and fascinating information about the quaint and humorous habits of our cousins across the sea, and decides to go in for domestic crises and burbling, choked-up reconciliations instead. The new note, sticky enough to be served up for marmalade in any old *pension*, only makes you want to get back to Paris, or possibly even New York.

Let me say right here that I blame not a single one of the actors. Don Ameche, as daddy, is brisk, beaming, and entirely ingratiating—even when he is required to bring a curtain down by clapping a matador's cap on his head and taking an antic stance in the twilight. Carmen Mathews, a mother anybody could warm up to, gets a pleasant laugh simply by bathing her face in quiet joy when she is mistaken for her own daughter. Audrey Christie and George Mathews work hard and honorably as a couple of naive but blustering tourists, Ann Flood is personally attractive as a potential concert-pianist, and I felt deeply for Sandra Church and Thomas Carlin as they struggled to put spunk and sprightliness into several mystifying lovespats.

Daily Mirror

February 15, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Holiday for Lovers' Gets Lots of Laughs

• But reviewer finds plot tenuous and some of the acting overly vigorous.

Over the past few weeks, the plays have been getting worse and the laughters better. Take Thursday evening at the Longacre, for instance. Shepard Traube presented a trite little comedy there called "Holiday for Lovers," and a goodly quota of the first-nighters fairly wrecked their ribs guffawing at its gags.

YOU'D HAVE thought the customers were listening to the witty lines of a G. B. Shaw instead of the labored patter of Ronald Alexander. If your reviewer found the new arrival somewhat tedious, it was evident that a majority of his neighbors thought it nothing short of hilarious. At least, they laughed as though they did.

Alexander started out with a promising idea: the fact that parents must reconcile themselves to losing their children. They must realize that the fledglings will grow up and fly the nest to build nests of their own. Take the Deans of Minneapolis, for example.

Like so many well-to-do Americans, they decided to make the grand tour of Europe. They wanted to surprise their elder daughter, who was in Paris studying to be a concert pianist, and give their younger sprout the chance to absorb a little culture. And were they in for a couple of shocks!

• • •

THE STUDENT had forsaken a career to marry her teacher's brilliant son, and her little sister—who had resented going abroad in the first place—found an abstract painter to her liking. So papa and mama Dean took it all in stride, and set out for a second honeymoon in Amalfi.

Either Alexander wrote a better play than we caught at the Longacre, or the usually reliable Traube's direction misfired. There were some funny wisecracks, all right, but they were awkwardly strung on a tenuous thread of plot. And the players hammered them over the footlights like histrionic blacksmiths.

Don Ameche, who was excellent in "Silk Stockings," made his points with overly vigorous strokes as papa Dean. He seemed determined to put some get-up-and-go into the part. Carmen Mathews, as his understanding spouse, brought more subtlety to her assignment. Audrey Christie, a devastating comedienne, scored with such ammunition as the playwright provided her.

GEORGE MATHEWS, a solid trouper, did his best for a gauche Bostonian familiar with Back Bay only when his fleet of trucks passed through it. Ann Flood had nice quality as the girl who sacrificed music to become a Mrs. Sandra Church, Thomas Carlin and Rene Paul met their challenges with courage.

In our book, "Holiday for Lovers," boasts the cardinal virtue of brevity. By the watch, it was a shortie. It only seemed to take an endless time in getting the Deans and the McDougals around the Continent. It merely proved that likeable and well-meaning people can be bores.

Journal American

February 15, 1957

Ameche Tops In a Charming Light Comedy

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE ROMANTIC COMEDY called "Holiday for Lovers" which opened at the Longacre last night, with Don Ameche in the top slot, is a good, engaging American-type show. There is no symbolism within a block of the theatre, no moral issues are posed. But it is charming and funny, often corny, and I think it will provide many average citizens with a rewarding evening's entertainment.

These are people we know, behaving as we have often observed them. They are irrational, emotional and as indigenous as a banana split; they are also honest, decent and devoted. It is a delightful experience for many theatre-goers who have been confounded by the sinister problems of the deep South, or the frustrations of a parcel of hop heads. It may not be progressive writing, or interpretive theatre, but it gets the nod from me.

Ronald Alexander's story is the simple Odyssey of a mid-Western family on their first visit to Europe. Their eldest daughter has been in Paris studying music, the youngest goes with them. Then there is the usual brother-in-law and his wife, who send them on their way and turn up later in Paris to add further confusion to the excursion.

Don Attractive

THE ATMOSPHERE of the evening is somewhat like many movies in which Ameche has performed before, and he is at his ingratiating and attractive best. In his recent forays on Broadway Don has emerged as a highly capable and assured light comedian, and this is his top effort to date.

As his wife, Carmen Mathews combines a brilliant talent for satire and pathos, thus serving as a fortunate foil for Ameche and the overpowering inroads of the in-laws. This couple, played by Audrey Christie and George Mathews, are hilarious most of the time. Mathews is almost alone in the field of the blustering, semi-illiterate Irish-American, and Miss Christie has for many semesters made a success as the sardonic mate to such characters. Here, again, she shines.

As the two daughters, Sandra Church is a most delectable young redhead with obvious ability as an actress, and Ann Flood, who plays the older sister, is equally skilled and attractive. Thomas Carlin, a relative newcomer also, gives an impressive performance as the young artist with whom Miss Church becomes enamored. Rene Paul and Denise Dorin complete the competent cast.

JOHN ROBERT LLOYD has constructed some effective and unusually workable drops which convert the stage into four separate hotel suites in various cities, and Shepard Traube, who both produced and directed, has supervised the proceedings with taste and lack of ostentation.

"Holiday for Lovers" will not be in contention for any literary awards, but it is warm and endearing and in good taste. You can take the whole family—and you should.

The New York Times

February 15, 1957

Theatre: School for Gags

'Holiday for Lovers' Is Staged at Longacre

By BROOKS ATKINSON

RONNY ALEXANDER is a Broadwayite in good standing for one particular reason: give him a line and he can return a gag instantly.

In "Holiday for Lovers," which opened at the Longacre last evening, he takes the author's privilege of giving himself the lines to answer with gags of his own devising. It is a little like throwing a tennis ball against a stone wall and fielding the rebound.

To many theatregoers this constitutes smart playwriting. Most of them were gathered happily in the Longacre last evening, picking up the yaks as they came hurtling off the stage. But the present notice expresses the opinion of one theatregoer who finds the reflex-action gag school tiresome and perhaps a little frantic. It conceals an author's inability or unwillingness to get to work on a play.

•

Mr. Alexander has a subject that could be both amusing and charming. He is conducting a Minneapolis family on the grand tour of Europe—New York to Paris, Seville, Rome and back to Paris again. The Deans are an amiable couple with two marriageable daughters, one of whom has been living abroad to study music. The other is seeing Europe for the first time. The student of music has already fallen in love. The other falls in love with a young American painter whom she meets in Paris.

In addition to being a facile gagman, Mr. Alexander is a good-hearted writer who likes people and wishes them well. Once or twice in the middle of the play and again at the conclusion, he lets his characters take charge of the play and behave like human beings. There are some sentimental scenes when Papa Dean learns how to behave toward two nubile daughters. At the finish of the comedy Papa Dean turns out to be, not a gag machine, but a likable parent and husband. A kind of general decency all around brings "Holiday for Lovers" to a sweet and pleasant ending.

•

Why has Mr. Alexander insisted on concealing the real nature of his characters until he is faced with the necessity of concluding his play? Probably because the sure-fire gag seems like a safer theatre device than the truth of characters or the values of a first trip to Europe. Remember what Sinclair Lewis' Dodsworth got out of travel aboard? He got some jokes, but he also got to know a lot about himself that neither he nor his friends had suspected before. It was a touching, enriching experience.

In "Holiday for Lovers," Paris, Seville and Rome sound like Broadway—snappy and phony, expensive and shallow. Shepard Traube has staged Mr. Alexander's comedy in the same idiom. Helene Pons' costumes look and doubtless are costly; John Robert Lloyd's succession of hotel rooms is clever scenery.

The performance is brash and noisy, coming down hard on the punch lines. Don Ameche shouts as Papa Dean. Carmen Mathews hops and bounds as Mama Dean. George Mathews roars as an obtuse relative of the Deans, and Audrey Christie growls and sneers as the obtuse wife. In the other parts, Sandra Church, Ann Flood, Thomas Carlin, René Paul and Denise Dorin behave like stock characters in the standard laugh show.

To many people this sort of hubbub and these sequences of retorts constitute lively entertainment. But to this theatregoer they constitute an evasion of comedy. Mr. Alexander is a talented writer who gags his way out of character drawing and genuine humor.

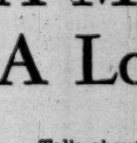
New York World-Telegram and The Sun

February 15, 1957

A Man Can Learn A Lot in Paris

By TOM DONNELLY.

Talk about violent contrasts! One night it's "The Tunnel of Love," a sex frolic with clinical overtones, and the next night it's "Holiday for Lovers" (at the Longacre), a romantic comedy as stimulating as a whole-wheat lollipop.



Can't we have something in the middle range? I know the golden mean is pretty tarnished these days, but surely some playwright could find a jar of polish somewhere. I have a feeling nobody's looking.

All the comedies this season have one thing in common. They are as structurally unsound as a ranch-type rambler made of frozen waffles. "Holiday for Lovers" may very well be the flimsiest of the lot.

More 'Innocents Abroad.'

It has occurred to playwright Ronald Alexander that we might all be ready for another go at the "Innocents Abroad" routine. His hero is Robert Dean, an insurance man from Minneapolis who takes his family to Paris, France, and then to Seville, Spain, and is terribly annoyed to discover that the inhabitants of these benighted cities speak foreign languages. Also, the bull fights in Spain make him ill.

Mrs. Dean does not despair. She knows that sooner or later her mate will awaken to the burnished charms of Europe, and that eventually he will face up to the truth that his daughters, aged 20 and 23, aren't babies any more and are entitled to go out on dates with representatives of the masculine sex. There is exceptionally heavy weather for a bit, since the 23-year-old has decided to give up her piano lessons, and has gotten secretly married, and cannot conceive of any way of imparting this information to her father.

However, stick around for a couple of hours and you will discover that all the loose ends in "Holiday for Lovers" get happily tied up. A number of Mr. Alexander's scenes are rather strikingly devoid of content, but the very first scene is quite meaty. It is all about how to pack a suitcase.

Mildly Amusing.

Mr. Alexander manages a mildly amusing line now and then, several of them in fact, but it can't be said that he has anything in particular on his mind. Don Ameche plays Mr. Dean. Remember how stern Mr. Ameche used to be in all those Twentieth Century-Fox movies of several years ago? He was always shouting furiously at poor Alice Faye. Mr. Ameche spends a lot of time in "Holiday for Lovers" snarling at people. It strikes me as a singular comic specialty.

Mr. Ameche is agreeably assisted by Carmen Mathews, Audrey Christie, George Mathews, Sandra Church, and Thomas Carlin.

John Robert Lloyd has designed the sets, all of them representing rooms in gaudy hotels in New York, Paris, Rome, etc. I got the impression at one point that a purple chandelier was suspended over the streets of Paris, but that can probably be traced to a disorder of my imagination.

New York Post

February 15, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Pleasant Tour of Don Ameche

Wasn't there a belief in his movie days that Don Ameche was rather a stuffy actor? If there was, it must have been Hollywood's fault, because on the stage he is the very picture of easy geniality, relaxation and warmheartedness, and a model of pleasant unpretentiousness.

Playing a friendly though quick-tempered American business man on his first trip to Europe in "Holiday for Lovers," which opened last night at the Longacre Theater, he is not only extraordinarily likable but proves to be a tower of strength to Ronald Alexander's new comedy.

As for the comedy itself, it is an easygoing and somewhat desultory affair, a sort of uncomplicated "Dodsworth," in which the husband and wife on their grand tour of France, Spain and Italy run into no difficult major problems, save those of language and the readily-solved romantic activities of their two daughters, and end up loving each other more than ever. They even grow to be very fond of Europe and find no great objections to European musicians or traveling American artists. "Holiday for Lovers" is certainly a play of international good will.

The Good Will

No one could accurately describe it as an eventful comedy, and it is both machine-made and slightly ramshackle in its modest manipulations of plot. Slightness is its most noticeable quality. But this genuine good will that has gone into its characterizations and its viewpoint, combined with a certain unostentatious brightness in much of its dialogue, atones for its decided dramatic mildness, and then there is always Mr. Ameche with a pleasant supporting cast to brighten it. If there is room in our competitive theater for a nice little comedy, "Holiday for Lovers" is it.

To get down to more details, we first see its friendly Western couple in New York preparing to sail for Europe, and disturbed by the patronizing advice of people who have been abroad once and insist on telling them what to do there. In Paris, the husband feels cramped by the language barrier. In Spain, he finds he doesn't like bullfighting. In Italy, the romantic problems of the two daughters begin to upset him. Back in Paris, he finds that the trip and his daughters are turning out famously. As a matter of fact, there isn't much more than that.

Husband and Wife

Nevertheless, there is something remarkably pleasant about the play's frank lack of any particular dramatic combustion. Furthermore, Mr. Ameche's portrait of the guileless American, whose temper is more than matched by his innate generosity and willingness to learn, has a genuine and completely believable goodness of heart about it and Carmen Mathews, as his quietly affectionate wife, is equally persuasive in depicting authentic and uncloying decency of spirit. I can't say that their travels are exciting, but they are surprisingly agreeable to watch.

The performances in the lesser roles are likewise helpful. Ann Flood is particularly attractive as the older daughter, and Sandra Church is spirited as the younger one. George Mathews and Audrey Christie make the annoyingly helpful relations bumptious without going to extremes about it, which is a notable merit. Thomas Carlin, an excellent young actor, is admirable as the painter, and Rene Paul is inoffensively suave as a Continental gentleman whom the parents wrongly mistrust. "Holiday for Lovers" is minor but disarmingly likable, and Mr. Ameche is a delight.

"Intermezzo"

The New York Times

February 15, 1957

Giraudoux' 'Intermezzo'

Fantasy Is Performed by French Company

By MILTON BRACKER

IF you were the kind of child who wept when Snow White ate the poisoned apple; or, more to the point, if you are the kind of adult whose eyes brimmed when she revived at the touch of the handsome prince — then "Intermezzo" may be for you.

In the Isabelle of Simone Valère, it has a confounded Snow White indeed. In the Controller, as played by Jean Desailly, it has a prince whose lack of royal birth is made up for by the provincial earnestness, the fundamental pureheartedness, of his love. And in the seven little girls (recruited from a local school) it has seven "dwarfs" who are shriller, daintier and somewhat more prescient than those of the fairy tale.

•

For "Intermezzo" is a fairy tale, too, and Isabelle, like Snow White, murmurs "Where am I?" when she awakens. But since the piece was written by Jean Giraudoux, it is by no means as undeviatingly lucid as a story by the Brothers Grimm. And there is the rub. As brought to the Winter Garden last night by the Renaud-Barrault troupe, it is both a hymn to fantasy and a paean to every-day reality. As philosophy, it is a detached debate between Death and Life. As theatre, it exists on too many levels; and the steps between them are not always inevitably transitional.

Giraudoux wrote it in 1933. More than two decades before, in a book called "L'Ecole des Indifférents," he had explored the possibilities of having a ghost instruct the living. In "Intermezzo," a ghost haunts a small French town and upsets the normal ironies of its existence. (A pauper now wins the lottery. The prize motorcycle goes to a youth who can use it.) Most disquieting, the specter seems to have won the affection of Isabelle, the school teacher—and the self-protective friendship of her pupils.

The Inspector arrives to extirpate such goings-on. He appoints the Controller of Weights and Measures to take over Isabelle's class. He hires two bumpkins to shoot the phantom; but when they do, the effect is impermanent. Ultimately it is not the massively bureaucratic Inspector, but the devoted and fumblingly poetic Controller who wins Isabelle back from her necrophilic swoon. It is not that Love conquers Death, which would be to oversimplify Girardoux by far. It is rather that the only normal route to death, as the Controller puts it, is life; that to share the ultimate secret, one must first walk in harmony with life, and precisely at the pace it sets.

The town's thoughtful druggist, who with the aid of the children (and the music of Francis Poulenc) reconstructs around the unconscious girl the sounds of her daily existence, underwrites the Controller's victory. And all is promptly as it was. The millionaire wins the lottery. The motorcycle goes to a hopeless cripple.

As the ghost, Jean-Louis Barrault is smooth and beautiful; but only in the last act does he really have much to do. M. Desailly as his successful rival and Pierre Bertin as the overstuffed and underbrained Inspector are both flexible and consistent—as generally versatile throughout the evening as audiences have previously been led to expect. Jean Juillard, as one of the executioners, is briefly excellent. Françoise Golea, as Luce, a link betwen Isabelle and the phantom in one sense, and between Isabelle and the children in another, is pretty and eloquent.

"INTERMEZZO"

Play by Jean Giraudoux; staged by Jean-Louis Barrault; decor and costumes by Maurice Brianchon; presented by Sol Hurok under the auspices of the Government of the French Republic at the Winter Garden Theatre, February 14, 1957. The cast:

Isabelle.....Simone Valere
Armande Mangebois..Natalie Nerval
Leonide Mangebois.....
Francoise Ledoux
The Controller.....Jean Desailly
The Inspector.....Pierre Bertin
The Mayor.....Regis Outin
The Chemist...Jean-Pierre Granval
Cambronne.....Jean Juillard
Crapuce.....Jacques Galland
The Ghost...Jean-Louis Barrault
Luce.....Francoise Golea
Monsieur Adrien...Gerard Dournel
Pere Tellier.....Jean Lancelot

"Intermezzo" was done in English here in 1950, titled "The Enchanted." It lasted forty-five performances; so esoteric a plant as a mandrake from Limousin could hardly have been expected to root more deeply on Broadway. The play is far less a distinguished prank than "Amphitryon 38," far less ironically inexorable than last season's "Tiger at the Gates." It is flecked more with the authorcraft of "The Madwoman of Chaillot" and "Ondine." As such, it will be repeated through tomorrow night.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
February 15, 1957

'Intermezzo'

By Bert McCord

At the Winter Garden Thursday night the Barrault players turned to "Intermezzo," Jean Giraudoux's witty comedy of manners and metaphysics. This is the fifth offering of the French repertory company and will be on view through tomorrow night.

In "Intermezzo," Giraudoux is concerned with a brief interlude in a small provincial town in France where civic life has been thrown head over heels by the presence of an occult spirit and the activities of a virtuous young girl who seeks to purify her earthly environment.

This work, which Giraudoux deliberately called a comedy rather than a fantasy, may remind you of "The Potting Shed," in which Graham Greene makes a suspenseful detective story out of his consideration of faith and disbelief. Giraudoux has chosen a ghost story as the means of dramatizing his thoughts of life and death, but whereas Greene hews strictly to the line of his thesis, Giraudoux, with that peculiarly Gallic blend of abandon and precision, lets his ideas tumble forth whenever they want to.

Thus, Giraudoux gives himself ample scope to indulge in a brilliant display of verbal pyrotechnics, ranging from trenchant satire to rollicking low comedy, embracing double-entendres and paradox in his argument and effective situation comedy in his dramatics.

As staged by Jean-Louis Barrault, who also plays the ghost, "Intermezzo" is almost always compelling and really comes to vibrant life in the last act when he reaches the showdown between the ghost and his mortal rival, the controller of weights and measures.

Jean Desailly, as the controller, is the hero of the evening. In the role of the ingenuous bureaucrat, who doesn't mind if his fiancee insists upon loving both life and death, but really draws the line at her wanting both a living and a dead man, M. Desailly gives an eloquent performance. And Simone Valere is right up there with him as Isabelle, the girl who conspires with the ghost only to lose out at the last minute when she manifests the human emotion of being touched by her mortal suitor's ardor.

The two of them worked together beautifully the entire evening, particularly at the outset of the third act when he seeks to imbue her with the poetry of his world of statistics and the imaginative unpredictability of the bureaucrat's routine life. This scene was a triumph and brought resounding applause from an appreciative audience.

Virtually everyone acquitted himself well. As the inspector, dedicated to law and order and determined to disprove the existence of the ghost, Pierre Bertin played with a Simon Legree manner and a Groucho Marx walk that were perhaps exaggerated but nonetheless effective. Regis Outin was terribly French provincial as the Mayor, and Jean-Pierre Granval's superficially casual chemist was a proper foil for the controller. And Natalie Nerval and Francoise LeDoux sparkled as the Mangebois Sisters who bring about the prosecution of Isabelle when they find her diary in which she recounts all that she is doing to upset the status quo.

Once again, the Barrault company has given us a highly stylized performance of a comedy that itself has both style and content.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
February 15, 1957

'Intermezzo' Opens At Winter Garden

By ROBERT S. KANE.

Jean Giraudoux's "Intermezzo," in its original French version, arrived in America last night, nearly a quarter-century after its Paris premiere—and it was worth waiting for.

Jean Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud revived the play abroad a year ago and wisely brought it along to the Winter Garden with their repertory company, as the fifth presentation of their current season. It will be repeated tonight and at matinee and evening performances Saturday.

Needs Concentration.

Giraudoux counted on thoughtful audiences that listened carefully. Even "The Enchanted," the 1950 English-language adaptation of "Intermezzo," required a great deal of concentration. And this production, except for the most accomplished of Gallic linguists, asks even more.

"Intermezzo" is a fantasy with a plot only Giraudoux could make plausible. It's the story of a pretty, provincial schoolteacher whose infatuation for a ghost symbolizes a disillusionment with life, a belief that immortality offers something far more worthwhile.

Giraudoux was able to make his heroine's love for this benevolent, luck-giving ghost understandable, even touching. Indeed, all of the village liked the ghost and the blessings he brought to its citizens—a lottery prize for a poor family, a bicycle to a champ cyclist without a vehicle, a fairy tale to the eight delightful charges of the schoolteacher heroine.

But ghostly benefactors are hardly a solution to life. And so the playwright deftly weaves into his story the strong, arbitrary arm of bureaucracy in the person of a pompous government inspector who undertakes an ambitious campaign to destroy the village ghost.

Careful Subtlety.

But he makes no progress, despite the authority of the government, the acquiescence of a weak-willed but well-meaning mayor, and the dim-witted executioners he has brought on the scene. The teacher does not budge until she falls in love with a real-life human being. Only then does the ghost die.

And there Giraudoux makes his point: One does not have to court death to recognize the beauty of life, despite its imperfections. He is saying that only love can transform ordinary things into things of beauty. It is not an original ideology but Giraudoux expresses it poignantly and with carefully wrought subtlety.

None of the characters—not even the overbearing inspector or the two busybody old maids who take his side—is really unpleasant. And none is a stereotype, either. The ghost, played by Mr. Barrault, in somber gray robes, looks as a spirit should, but acts very much like a man in love—vain, impatient, and not without a sense of humor.

Talented Actress.

The schoolteacher of Simone Valere—surely one of the most beautiful and talented actresses to visit here in a long time—is tender, lovable, loving—but yet full of good fun and stubborn spunk. Pierre Bertin's inspector is the comic plum of the evening—fat and ridiculous in top hat and brilliant purple waistcoat; yet a compassionate man whom one knows would admit that he never had all the answers.

Jean Desailly evokes warmth, smiles and sympathy as Miss Valere's finally successful earthly suitor; Jean-Pierre Granval is a properly dapper chemist, and Francoise Golea is a charmer as the eldest and most articulate of the octet of ghoul-loving students. Her colleagues are seven appealing, crisply costumed jeunes filles, straight from a Vogue fashion ad—but talented.

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

February 15, 1957

Parisians Tell A Ghost Story

By CHARLES McHARRY

(Reprinted from yesterday's late editions)

Our visiting French players came up with a ghost story last night. The presentation at the Winter Garden was Jean Giraudoux' "Intermezzo," and, as local audiences have come to expect, the company was handsome, ingratiating and expert.

The fair Simone Valere, acclaimed in earlier dramas in the Paris troupe's current repertory stand, played the role of a village lass in love with a specter, a girl undecided on her preference for life or death.

Since Mlle. Valere is not the wan type, being endowed with flesh and blood along the proportions of Marilyn Monroe, it strained the imagination to fancy her stricken by a shade.

He's No Chiller

Yet, the ghost as played by company boss Jean-Louis Barrault was no chilly creep. He was a warm-type hunk of ectoplasm, concerned with scouting old beliefs and causing the country folk to think a little.

Giradoux, in his comic fantasy, seeks truth about the living and the dead. It isn't an eerie play, nor are the author's questions finally resolved. Miss Valere is allowed to live and to switch her affections to one of the local boys. The ghost, to everybody's satisfaction, takes off to haunt another house.

Last evening's production was enhanced by the presence of seven French children in the cast. The most remarkable thing about French kids, as Mark Twain pointed out many years ago, is that they even know how to speak French.

"Intermezzo," fifth offering by the Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault company, will be seen through Saturday evening. The troupe's final bill is to begin Monday.

New York Post

February 15, 1957

By

Frances Herridge

Renaud-Barrault Group Does Giraudoux Play

The Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault Company brought a saucy impudence last night to "Intermezzo," the sixth production of the French group's season at the Winter Garden. But the pert acting did not suffice to animate the Jean Giraudoux ghost story.

The actors had to cope with a dated play about a young schoolmistress half in love with death. Barrault as the ghostly visitor served merely as a foil for the radiant performing of Simone Valere as the young lady. As her students, a group of charming little girls, led by Francoise Golea, brought a note of credibility to Giraudoux' fantasy. And Jean Desailly, as a shy suitor, introduced the play's most forceful scene. Pierre Bertin, Regis Outin and Jean-Pierre Granval were amusing as dignitaries ridding the town of the ghost.

Subscription Orders Now Being Taken

1957

NEW YORK

THEATRE CRITICS' REVIEWS

A Dependable, Accurate Source of Information of the American Theatre

"The Tunnel of Love"

New York Post

February 14, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Trouble With Having a Baby

Possibly the vagaries of sex in Westport seem funnier in fairly distant cities than they do in New York. "The Tunnel of Love," a new comedy which Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries have adapted from a highly successful novel of the same name by Mr. DeVries, deals frivolously with this particular subject, and the out-of-town reports on it were nothing short of ecstatic. But it had its Manhattan premiere at the Royale Theater last night, and, despite some bright lines and the valiant services of Tom Ewell and a good cast, it struck me as very commonplace fooling.

Its basic contention is no doubt sound enough. It is that while some families experience great difficulty in having, or even adopting, babies, others turn them out with great regularity, which is hardly a revolutionary theory. Where the authors appear to be on more doubtful ground is in their belief that there is something prodigiously uproarious about both phenomena. There was, I thought, little evidence last night that either the desperate effort of one wife to be a mother or the inevitability with which another kept becoming one was by any means essentially hilarious.

There is a second theory on which "The Tunnel of Love" is based, and it, too, possesses a certain validity. It is that some men have no talent for infidelity, and that when they attempt it, no matter how innocently, they are sure to make a mess of things. The playwrights go a little further than this and express the additional conviction that the men who don't go in happily for extra-marital activities are the average, majority-type citizens, which impressed me as not only open to doubt but rather surprising in a comedy that prides itself on sophistication.

That fact is, though, that the Fields-DeVries comedy, despite various efforts in that direction, is not really an essay in sophistication. There are a few satirical thrusts which might conceivably come under such a heading, especially in the identification of the central figure's friend, a gentleman given to playing around, as a "Babbitt Bohemian," but the play soon stops that sort of attack. Its essential topic is its hero's problems in being an unwilling rake, and here the treatment is merely that of regulation farcical maneuvering.

More specifically, the comedy has to do with the efforts of the Pooles of Westport to have a baby. They prefer one of their own, but they are perfectly willing to adopt one, and then Mr. Poole has a surprising encounter with the scientific lady from the adoption agency, and it seems likely that he is going to have a son he hadn't counted on. Taste is hardly the outstanding quality of "The Tunnel of Love," but what is frankly more important is that its situations aren't very comic and its dialogue, although often excellent, doesn't make up for its other defects.

Mr. Ewell, who had a considerably similar role in "The Seven Year Itch," continues to be an engaging comedian who knows his way around in a sex farce, and there are excellent performances by Nancy Olson as his wife, Darren McGavin as the Babbitt Bohemian, Elisabeth Fraser as his consistently pregnant spouse, Sylvia Daneel as the amorous lady from the agency, and, in a smaller role, Elizabeth Wilson as a less exacting employe of the same organization. But the hinterland success of "The Tunnel of Love" remains a mystery to me.

"THE TUNNEL OF LOVE"

Comedy in three acts and five scenes by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries; based on the novel by Mr. DeVries; staged by Mr. Fields; designed and lighted by Ralph Alswang; costumes by Virginia Volland; production associate Philip Langner; presented by the Theatre Guild at the Royale Theatre, February 13, 1957. The cast:

Augie Poole.....Tom Ewell
Isolde Poole.....Nancy Olson
Dick Pepper....Darren McGavin
Alice Pepper...Elisabeth Fraser
Estelle Novick....Sylvia Danes
Miss McCracken..Elizabeth Wilson

DAILY NEWS

February 14, 1957

Tom Ewell Wants a Tot in 'Tunnel Of Love,' Is Rewarded With Two

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Just as he was in "The Seven Year Itch," Tom Ewell is again a fellow with a glass in one hand, the bottle in the other and a woman who is not his wife on his mind. This situation is always bad for Ewell because he suffers so much, but it is good for the rest of us because it is so much fun watching him suffer.

The new occasion for Tom's discomfiture is "The Tunnel of Love," which the Theatre Guild presented at the Royale last evening. It is a farce by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries, based on DeVries' novel of the same title. It could stand some trimming in the middle act for the sake of pace, but even as it stands it is good fun, and the four actors who see Ewell through his miseries are a pleasant lot.

Yearn for a Tot

DeVries' story is about two exurbanite couples of Westport, Conn. Darren McGavin is an editor of a funny magazine and Ewell is a drawer of funny drawings. McGavin has a roving eye, but manages to pay enough mind to his wife, Elisabeth Fraser, to keep her well supplied with children.

Ewell, on the other hand, is the soul of devotion and so is his pretty spouse, Nancy Olson, and they want a child very much but don't seem to have the knack. So they decide to adopt one. A lady investigator from an adoptery comes slinking around, and before Tom knows it he has rendered her expectant.

Even Prof. Van Doren could figure out the plot from here. I know I did even before the authors got around to it. When the evening ends the mournful Ewell faces the prospect of becoming a father for a second and more legitimate time, and he vows he is going to sell the Westport house and move back to Manhattan, where children can be brought up decently.

A New Ingenue

Many of the lines of this farce have wit and sardonic crackle and I think it will go better if the actors play it faster tonight and not wait for the laughs. They can do it, because they're good actors —McGavin as the editor, Miss Fraser as his well-satisfied wife, Sylvia Daneel as the adoption service investigator and Elizabeth Wilson as another dispenser of tots to the right people.

Ewell is alone in his field of portraying innocent misery. His glassy stare and mirthless smile are works of comic art. And Miss Olson, making her Broadway debut as his wife, is just about the most attractive young lady of the clean and forthright type since Barbara Bel Geddes hit the stage as an ingenue.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

February 14, 1957

Life in the Wilds Of Connecticut

By TOM DONNELLY.

"The Tunnel of Love" (at the Royale) ought to hit the box-office target smack in the middle of the bull's-eye. It offers laugh after laugh, which is more than you can say for most comedies. It does not shrink from the subject of sex, a subject which has continued its hold on the public affections through sleet and storm and war and peace. Its star is Tom Ewell, repeating his "Seven Year Itch" performance, and you know how funny THAT was.

Well, now, only one admission could follow a build-up like that. The admission that I was never carried away by "The Tunnel of Love." All those laughs I got were isolated explosions. For me the piece has no sweep, no surge. It is not a mad symphony of hilarity, building to a riotous crescendo. I kept feeling that the needle had gotten stuck in a groove. A sharp needle, and a merry groove, but what of structure and symmetry? What of pace and development? Answer those questions, playwrights Josephs Fields and Peter DeVries, and see where it gets us.

Augie Poole, the battered hero of "The Tunnel of Love," and his wife Isolde, live in Westport, Conn., surrounded by people who combine poetry readings with barbecue parties ("Hot dogs and Dylan Thomas"). The Pooles are desperate to have a child, and "The Tunnel of Love" is quite explicit about their efforts in this direction. Some theatergoers may decide that good taste is being violated here, but I think that perhaps it is only being roughed up a bit, and the serious flaws of the drama lie elsewhere.

Blanket of Deception.

With no little strangers looming on their immediate horizon, the Pooles turn to an adoption agency. A representative of this outfit pays a call one day. She is an astonishing specimen, aggressive, a student of anthropology, and an addict of double scotches. She catches Augie at a moment when he is feeling generally discouraged, and is still smarting from the taunts of his best friend, a practicing amorist who sneers at Augie's sexual propriety. The lady carries Augie off into the night, a child is born of their brief irregular union, it is brought into the Poole home under a blanket of deception, and when Isolde discovers the tot's true authorship there is quite a commotion.

The playwrights are hard put to it to stretch this unlikely anecdote over three acts, and in the interests of theatrical compression, and in order to insure that their star will remain in the center of things, they have drastically altered the characters of the very amusing novel by Mr. DeVries on which the play is based. The Augie of the book was the rake of the neighborhood, and there was poignance in his decline and fall into that suburban orbit where "the damnation is that there is no damnation . . . where . . . the peal of doom is a penny whistle, the Good Humor bell calling the children at evening." Also there was some point.

One More Farce.

As it has been remodeled, "The Tunnel of Love" is just one more farce about one more wild oat, and the opportunity to satirize the wide-open wastes of Connecticut has been largely lost.

In any case, "The Tunnel of Love" always has Mr. Ewell to fall back on. He is wonderfully comical from first to last as a man with a spine of solid jelly, and he is agreeably assisted by Darren McGavin and Elisabeth Fraser as his intrusive neighbors, and by the extremely fetching Nancy Olson, as his wife. You could call Miss Olson a breath of spring and you wouldn't be original, but you would be right.

Daily Mirror

February 14, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'The Tunnel of Love' Just Misses Mark

• Tom Ewell and Nancy Olson star in Theatre Guild production.

"The Tunnel of Love," which the Theatre Guild brought to the Royale Wednesday evening, poses the question of taste. Your reaction to it will be determined by your attitude toward infidelity and illegitimacy. If you're sufficiently broad-minded to consider saucy sallies at the expense of these subjects humorous, then you'll have a rowdy and riotous time of it.

But if you think the sincere desire for parenthood, gained through adoption, hardly a matter for hilarity, you're likely to be offended as often as you are amused. When Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries adapted the latter's sophisticated novel for the stage, they apparently determined to wring laughs from it at all costs.

AUGIE AND ISOLDE Poole wanted a child. In a weak moment, Augie helped things along by having an affair with a pretty social worker from an adoption agency. Then, with a baby half their own, they discovered they were going to have another—all their own.

Augie was a well-meaning fellow who didn't have too much confidence in himself. He got great ideas for cartoons, but couldn't sell them when he drew them. So he became an idea man for others. But in the end he proved as prolific, when it came to sex, as his over-sexed neighbor, Dick Pepper.

Fields and DeVries have rung the changes on one thin joke, but they have also padded out their slender story line with a plethora of funny wisecracks about exurbanite living, psychiatry and the cocktail set. Be it reported that they incited a majority of the first-nighters to side-splitting howls.

As it came across the footlights last evening, "The Tunnel of Love" seemed a better play than met the ear. Under co-author Fields' direction, the cast was overly meticulous in selling the gags. The pace was too slow for farce that defied the rules of credibility. It gave you too much time to be critical.

TOM EWELL, who caused "The Seven Year Itch" to run for several years, in spite of a fumble here and there, made Augie more human and believable than the script. With a frustrated slump of the body, a shambling shuffle and a foolish grin, he turned dubious dross into comedy gold.

Nancy Olson, making her Broadway bow, was as pretty as a pinup girl, and enormously ingratiating as Augie's ever-loving spouse. Darren McGavin, another top-flighter, had the proper swagger and bravado as Augie's uninhibited friend and confidant. Elisabeth Fraser impressed as a young matron addicted to perpetual motherhood.

Sylvia Daneel was an orb-tonic as the serious-minded social worker who knew how to take a fling in stride. She almost persuaded you that her Eugene Scribes had pened the role accurately and convincingly. But let's face it, adoption centers do check their personnel more carefully than Messrs. Fields and DeVries would have you think.

THANKS TO THE resourceful Ewell and gifted associates, "The Tunnel of Love" packs plenty of robust chuckles. These affable players do much for a scenario that's long on running time and short on taste. They almost turn a miss into a near hit.

Journal-American

February 14, 1957

Ewell Slaves To Save Thin, Ailing Comedy

By JOHN McCLAIN

TOM EWELL is one of a rare platoon of current actors who can do almost nothing wrong. With his wizened face and tottering gait, his gift for immaculate timing, he can bring hilarity to the most feeble situation, and he is required to make the most strenuous use of all these talents to light up a new comedy called "The Tunnel of Love," which opened at the Royale Theatre last night.

This offering, an adaptation by Joseph Fields from a novel by Peter De Vries, is pretty thin stuff at the core. A young husband living in Westport, Conn., is determined to have a baby, even if he has to adopt one, and the means by which his wish is achieved is explored from every angle and batted about the premises until it is insensible.

It is a most meagre idea to begin with, and it is only due to Mr. Ewell's skill, the sterling support of his fellow players, and some adroit direction by Mr. Fields, that it emerges as anything more than a leaden balloon.

Novel Adoption

It appears that Ewell, an exurbanite, has been unable to provide his wife with an heir and has hence appealed to an adoption agency. The agency sends an enormously beguiling young lady to investigate his acceptability as a prospective parent and—you guessed it—he is rewarded by becoming the father of the investigator's child.

The last act is involved with his wife's preoccupation with the fact that the little foundling bears such a startling resemblance to her husband.

This is the stuff of which short-short stories, skits and TV half hours are made, but it wears thin for an entire evening in the theatre. Even the foolproof Mr. Ewell grimaces and bounces himself to death, pausing over such worn "bits" as the martini into which the vermouth has been injected by an atomizer. It is hideous to contemplate what would have happened had these chores been assigned to a less engaging performer.

Fighting determinedly on his side are Nancy Olson, as his wife, who is not only very pretty indeed, but an assured and capable little actress. Darren McGavin, usually cast in roles of romantic intent, here plays the friend of the family whose problem is the reverse of Ewell's: he has more children than he can handle. He exhibits an excellent gift for comedy in the part.

Solid Support

Elisabeth Fraser gives an amusing portrayal of the wife of McGavin, who is seldom separated from her maternity gown; Sylvia Daneel is a most seductive operative from the adoption home, and Elizabeth Wilson has a rousing scene in which she informs the young couple that they are about to be blessed with a small ready-made addition.

Ralph Alswang has run up a delightful country living room, with appropriate view of the verdant country and, as stated, Joe Fields has directed with humorous compassion.

Perhaps the advance "grapevine" was too elaborate, or possibly "Visit to a Small Planet" sneaked in and took some of the breeze out of "Tunnel of Love." In any case, I was disappointed. It is funny—but I thought it should have been funnier.

The New York Times
February 14, 1957

Theatre: 'Tunnel of Love'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

LET it be reported in the first sentence that the audience at the Royale last evening appeared to regard "The Tunnel of Love" as a bright and entertaining comedy.

But the rest of this report will have to be in a key of modified rapture. For to this department the skit by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries gets monotonous before the final curtain.

It derives from a novel by Mr. DeVries, now fashioned into merchantable theatre form by Mr. Fields, who is an old hand at putting Broadway amusements together. It describes the ordeal of a Westport, Conn., artist who sires a baby out of the home but sneaks it home as an adopted child.

In the first act "The Tunnel of Love" promises to be a sophisticated and satirical comedy about the folk ways of the exurbanites. The authors have written some acidly diverting lines about the eccentric though worldly habits of an artist and his wife who would like to have a baby but can't, and a brisk editor and his wife who add one more baby to the family every year. With Tom Ewell looking indecisive as the artist and moving shiftlessly around the room, with Nancy Olson looking most attractive and acting with modesty and candor as the artist's wife, it is not difficult to enjoy "The Tunnel of Love" in the first act.

•

Since the artist and his wife continue to be childless, they apply to an adoption agency for a baby. It is the whim of the authors to provoke a fleeting though amorous affair on the quiet between the artist and the lady investigator from the agency. In the course of time, this incident of rapture does produce a baby, which, in turn, becomes the child that is adopted. All Mr. Fields and Mr. DeVries have to do then is to prevent the artist's wife from knowing who the child is until the time for the third act has come around.

•

Even if the central joke were as funny as the authors imagine, it would not be hilarious enough to be the sole topic of conversation all evening. "The Tunnel of Love" is a one-gag job. It jabs the funny bone in the same place repeatedly. After the first act the satirical comments on the habits of the commuting intellectuals give way to a series of guffaws about a little bastard.

Ralph Alswang has provided a cheerful setting that represents the whimsical interior of a Westport barn remodeled into an artist's home. Serving as his own director, Mr. Fields has staged a pleasant performance.

No matter what the play may be, Mr. Ewell is always a funny man. His pointed face, his puzzled eyes, his loose joints, his slow takes when a good line comes along are invariably enjoyable. As the careless artist, he gives a bland, light, humorous performance.

In addition to Miss Olson, the cast includes Darren McGavin, who is heartily amusing as a profligate Westport editor; Elisabeth Fraser, as a notoriously fertile wife; Sylvia Daneel, as the agency investigator who produces her own foundling, and Elizabeth Wilson, as the agency representative who, as bureaucrats say, finalizes the adoption.

Most of the Theatre Guild's subscribers last night enjoyed themselves as thoroughly as if they were seeing "Charley's Aunt" for the first time. After the first act had slipped by agreeably, this department thought it was looking at a piece of hackwork.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
February 14, 1957

THEATER

'The Tunnel of Love'

By WALTER F. KERR

IT MAY be that the funniest spectacle in all three acts of "Tunnel of Love" is the irresistible sight of Tom Ewell laughing at his own jokes. Mr. Ewell's brand of laughter may be described as earth-shaking. At least it shakes *him*.

As the first twinge of delight at what he is going to say comes over him, his ankles begin to tremble. His feet twitch back and forth. Then his legs go—aspens in the breeze of the mifth that is stealing steadily upwards. In a moment his shoulders have begun to rock slightly up and down, as though there were a skilled marionettist hovering directly above him. And now it is time for his head to rotate slowly in the socket of his neck—while the creases of his face expand into a pumpkin's toothy grin. With every fiber that is in him pulsating like a Model T Ford with a faulty ignition, Mr. Ewell is at last ready to be recorded on a seismograph. He is also ready to go into the comedian's Hall of Fame as an inventive, endearing, and just naturally hilarious fellow.

• • •

And let there be no mistake about this: he has the jokes to laugh at. Peter DeVries, author of the original novel and co-author with Joseph Fields of the Connecticut sex-survey at the Royale, is a man whose jokes pop out of his ears, eyes, and trouser-cuffs like sand in the summertime.

Mr. DeVries cannot contemplate the reconverted barns in which exurbanites meet, mate, roam, and reconsider without spitting out quick little pen-portraits of all that goes on. The girls in bright plaid slacks and the boys in Bermuda shorts sit "sipping espresso while the children are at church, reading Sartre behind picture windows." Sunday afternoon barbecues are composed of "hot dogs and Dylan Thomas," the weight of the Sunday papers is the reason why "this country is so full of slipped discs," and snoopers who start asking questions about the native's nocturnal habits are told "if you want to play Margaret Mead, go to Scarsdale."

• • •

Puns rattle on the terrace like good-natured hailstones: we hear about 'sibling revelry' and—in circumstances stemming from a light infidelity—about the 'pregnant pause.' Mr. DeVries is witty ("confession is good for the soul but only in the same way a tweed coat is good for dandruff"), he is insanely inventive (the essentially sound plot-line has to do with a man who wants to adopt a baby and manages to get a girl from the adoption agency to 'provide' him with one), and he is prodigal. The switches never stop swerving.

• • •

But here, I think, we come to the rub. Mr. DeVries is not content simply to make jokes about the action and jokes about the characters. He finally winds up making jokes about jokes. The attractive people, eternally twisting and topping one another's ripostes, begin to seem engaged in a rather literary, and slightly stiff, game of Twenty Answers. It also thins out, sex-wise. The first scene, in which a wife works very hard to get her husband's co-operation at a time when her medical temperature is propitious, is perfectly engaging in its ribald and very homey way. By the time, however, that we have rung what must be seventy changes on the same fecund tune, a faint monotony begins to beat on the listening ear. The mention of Sartre— or any other word begining with 's'—comes as a mild relief. Somebody's been milking this valuable, but ultimately perishable, commodity.

• • •

I should add that Nancy Olson, a wonderfully pretty and winning girl with bright blue eyes, silky blonde hair, and an enchanting mouth that trusts nobody, is delectable at every turn. Darren McGavin, as a crew-cut editor who feels profound guilt at the end of every affair but carefully waits until the end of it) is altogether amiable, and Sylvia Daneel, Elizabeth Fraser, and Elizabeth Wilson are engaging, too.

"Tunnel of Love" is bright and intermittently beguiling. I wish its quipsters knew just when to quit.

"Les Nuits de la Colere" and "Feu la Mere de Madame"

Journal American
February 12, 1957

French Farce And Tragedy

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE ESTIMABLE Renaud-Barrault Co. from France last night continued their repertory of tragedy and comedy in their native tongue at the Winter Garden, presenting two items called "Nights of Fury" and "Dear Departed Mother-in-law." In the instance of the first offering they toss a sincere challenge at any audience in the world: Never mind how well you understand French, just try to understand the play!

I carefully read the English synopsis before the curtain rose, I kept a hand-lettered chart of the characters and sat on the edge of my seat to catch each nasal inflection, but they had me groggy and reeling on the ropes before the first stanza was 10 minutes old.

What did emerge, and I'm not too sure about even this, is a consideration of life and loyalties in the French Underground and the tenuous situations (as in "The Hidden River") which brought doubt and despair to many.

Flashback Style

But to tell this M. Armand Salacrou has chosen to employ a technique of flashbacks, of the living conversing with the dead which, as I say, would be tortuous enough without a language barrier. When it is all wrapped up, furthermore, the only conclusion seems to be that any sacrifice is worth the price of being able to say to posterity and one's children, "I lived honorably."

That theme has been pursued elsewhere, from the time of Greek tragedies, and I don't think this version by M. Salacrou is the definitive work. On the other hand, it does not mean that the very capable players fail in their tasks.

Jean Desailly and Madeleine Renaud are effective as the couple who are dispatched early in the proceedings but remain to deliver several thousand words; Jean-Louis Barrault and Nathalie Nerval, are the patriots who survive to resolve the moral, and they are excellent. The concluding members of the cast, Jean Juillard, Georges Cusin, Regis Outin and Gabriel Cattand are notably facile.

Frothy Blackout

Felix Labisse has improvised a set which, while ingenious, seemed to give the stage hands last night a bad time. This play, in fact, seeemd a far cry from the pageantry and importance of the company's preceding efforts.

The latter half of the evening, a comedy by Georges Feydeau, is a frothy little blackout evolving from a husband's ill-advised attendance at a fancy dress ball, and the mixup which ensues when the wrong mother-in-law dies. This is simple, and it is fun anywhere, the pantomime is such that almost any regular patron of a French restaurant would follow the action.

Featured here are Pierre Bertin, Madeleine Renaud, Beauchamp, Francoise Ledoux, and they all seem to have a good time. This is the kind of farce at which the French, and these players, excel; it is bright in the best Continental tradition and restores some of the dolorous vagaries of the first part of the evening.

"LES NUITS DE LA COLERE" and "FEU LA MERE DE MADAME"

"Les Nuits de la Colere" A play by Armond Salacrou; decor by Felix Labisse; staged by Jean-Louis Barrault. Both plays presented by Sol Hurok under the auspices of the Government of the French Republic at the Winter Garden Theatre, February 11, 1957. The cast:

Jean Cordeau..Jean-Louis Barrault
Louise Cordeau..Nathalie Nerval
Pierrette Bazire..Madeleine Renaud
Bernard Bazire.....Jean Desailly
Rivoire.....Jean Juillard
Dede.....Georges Cusin
Lecoco.....Regis Oustin
Pizancon.....Gabriel Cattand

"Feu la Mere de Madame" A play by Georges Feydeau; staged by Jean-Louis Barrault. The cast:

Lucien.....Pierre Bertin
Joseph.....Beauchamp
Yvonne.....Madeleine Renaud
Annette.....Francois Ledoux

New York Post

February 12, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

The French in Drama and Farce

There is inevitable dramatic effectiveness in the sight of the French doing a play about their own resistance movement. It may have little to do with esthetics, but the thought that the author and the actors are re-creating the memories of a sinister and terrible period of history through which they lived is bound to give a haunting power to such a work. This is certainly true of "Les Nuits de la Colere," which the Jean-Louis Barrault company offered at the Winter Garden last night.

Actually, I am not at all sure how good a play Armand Salacrou's drama of those monstrous days when France was under the heel of the German invader really is. Its tragic story of two friends, one of whom was driven to betray the other through their different conceptions of where their obligations lay, is, for all its melodramatic action, too dependent on dialogue in which the conflict of ideas is argued out to enable me, with my wistfully limited French, to feel certain about it.

The Form

But I do know that, despite a handicap which kept me from following the argument in complete detail, the feeling of reality inescapably tied up with "Les Nuits de la Colere" made it seem almost constantly arresting. And, in addition to this emotional advantage, the play is interesting in its form, beginning with the triple killing of an underground member, an active collaborator, and the man who betrayed his friend because he was led to believe that his first obligation was to his family.

It is perhaps a little bewildering when the dead men, from their reclining positions, begin their discussion of the issues involved, but it takes a surprisingly short while to accept even this convention. From then on, the action moves back and forth in time, but the dramatic drive progresses steadily, and while it is assuredly exasperating to be unable to follow every convolution of the narrative, enough forcefulness remains to keep one caught up in its emotional impact.

The Farce

"Les Nuits de la Colere," or as the English title has it, "Nights of Fury," is a short play, and it is followed by Georges Feydeau's brief farce, "Feu la Mere de Madame." Here an American reviewer is on safer, if less impressive, ground, for this is a simple little vaudeville about the mistaken belief of a battling husband and wife that a dead mother-in-law has left them some money. There isn't much to it, but, in its distinctly minor fashion, it's agreeable fun.

It almost goes without saying that both plays are well acted. There is less room for style than in the classic items in the visitors' repertory, but M. Barrault, Madeleine Renaud, Natalie Nerval and Jean Desailly are particularly good in "Les Nuits de la Colere," and so are Mlle. Renaud and two excellent comedians, Pierre Bertin and the gentleman satisfied to call himself just Beauchamp, in the Feydeau farce. But the French resistance movement is the hero of the evening.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
February 12, 1957

THEATER

French Theater

By WALTER F. KERR

WHAT is fascinating about the new double-bill at the Winter Garden is not simply that the Renaud-Barrault players are hurling their energies into two such broadly contrasted kinds of theater—old-fashioned farce and contemporary melodrama—but that they are able to achieve their ranging effects with such tiny variations of pressure.

• • •

Watch what they do with George Feydeau's absolutely inconsequential bit of bedrocm buffoonery, "Feu La Mere de Madame." The nonsense here is as thin and as artificially painted as a poster plastered on a nineteenth-century cabaret wall. When Pierre Bertin staggers home of an evening (late), he is dressed in the fancy-ball finery of Louis XIV—except that he is wearing eyeglasses, sporting sadly wrinkled stockings and carrying a seedy umbrella.

The signal for slapstick has been given. Before the romp is over, Mr. Bertin is going to manage to sit on the serving-maid, Madeleine Renaud is going to faint spectacularly and indelicately all over a stranger, and the stranger is going to hurry after some helpful medicines by striding majestically across the family bed.

• • •

But there is no whoop and holler from the actors, no wading into this stuff as though it were a high-school holiday. Instead, they give it just an ounce of judicious weight, of grotesque sobriety.

Madeleine Renaud kicks her way out from under the bedclothes, challenges her husband to admire certain neglected aspects of her figure, and paddles her fast, flat feet across an unyielding rug with the hard-headed tenacity of a woman who has done a bit of living. M. Bertin nods off to sleep in the face of his wife's anguish, and succeeds in changing his clothes without removing his shoulder-length wig, with the wholly realistic fatigue of a man who has lived too much. This kind of farce begins by paying homage to the world we know—and gets its resounding laughs by the addition of a faint trace of garlic.

• • •

If the Feydeau frolic takes its essential gusto from a slight, nicely calculated increase in the size of the playing-style, Armand Salacrou's "Les Nuits de la Colere" profits from an equally careful diminuendo.

The materials of the evening's longer play are sober and searing: a family-loving young fellow has betrayed a friend during the complicated nights and days of the French Resistance movement during the last war. Since both British and American playwrights have been working over this theme for some time past, it is obviously high time we were exposed to a native treatment of the subject. The differences are striking.

Where our own playwrights tend to approach the problems of conscience involved with a kind of single-minded, eternally frowning intensity that borders on the pontifical, M. Salacrou has bent his ear much closer to the day-to-day accents of domestic life. The bickering that goes on behind shuttered windows is often a light, nagging foolish bickering. There are jokes to be made, even when a doomed train is bearing down on a band of saboteurs. The inflections of treason are sometimes casual.

• • •

And the Barrault company drop their voices a notch now and then to catch that unfamiliar strain. The image of M. Barrault himself, his eyes shut tight and his arms hanging limp from rigid shoulders as he circles his immobile companions, is an enormously evocative one. And the ease with which Mlle. Renaud moves from the animated tyranny of a mother-hen to a cold, smiling kiss of betrayal is perhaps the most chilling effect of all. The tension seems to climb as the behavior becomes more and more ordinary.

No matter the direction in which these sensitive players move; the level is always just right.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
February 12, 1957

A Comparative Anatomy Lesson

By TOM DONNELLY.

"Feu La Mere de Madame," or, as we call it in my set, "Dear Departed Mother-in-law," is a most amusing item on the latest bill offered by the estimate French actors currently holding forth at the Winter Garden.

The curtain rises on the boudoir of Yvonne and Lucien, who are, I hasten to assure you, married. I mean, to each other. It is very early in the morning. Lucien, who has forgotten his key, awakens Yvonne, who is indignant. Lucien is attired in a Louis XIV costume. He has just been to the Bal des Quatres Arts, and he looks exactly like a bundle of old window curtains.

Alarms and Excursions.

In not much longer than it takes to say "Voila!" Yvonne and Lucien are hotly engaged in what Americans like to think of as a typically French domestic argument. Lucien tactlessly says that he has greatly admired the nude charms of the lady who impersonated Amphitrite at the ball, and, quick as thunder, Yvonne has leaped out of bed and is challenging him to find fault with her own physique. He does so, and the battle rages on. There is a further diversion, when word is brought that Yvonne's mother has died. Yvonne faints, the boudoir explodes with noise, confusion, misunderstandings, alarms and excursions and so on and so forth, and it is all hilarious, in the broadest possible fashion.

Madeleine Renaud is marvelously funny as Yvonne, and as she flies out of bed and across the room (which she does on several occasions), she achieves something of the wild unlikely velocity of a figure in an animated cartoon. Pierre Bertin is brilliant as her mate, and there are fine supporting bits by Francoise Ledoux as a yawning maid, and by Beauchamp as the midnight visitor with the tidings edged in black. This stirring charade is the work of Georges Feydeau.

Nights of Fury.

The other, and quantitatively larger, part of the program is occupied by Armand Salacrou's "Les Nuits de La Colere" ("Nights of Fury"). This item is a tricky affair, replete with flashbacks and talking corpses and narrative peculiarities of various kinds. It deals with the problems of guilt, courage, cowardice, and responsibility as they are highlighted during the years of the French occupation.

I have previously admitted to having a feeble grasp on the nuances of the French language, so I will content myself with cautiously observing that "Nights of Fury" seems to be a dramatized debate, with characters who have no particular inner life of their own, but are mere vehicles for the expression of various points of view. And it is my impression that the views expressed are fairly standard for dramas of the French Resistance, which we seem to have had rather a lot of lately.

The acting, by Jean-Louis Barrault, Mlle. Renaud, Nathalie Nerval, Jean Desailly, and the others, is excellent.

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER
February 12, 1957

French Actors in a Crisp Drama And a Fine Husband-Wife Farce

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault company of artful French actors offered a capital double bill at the Winter Garden last evening—a terse and imaginative drama and an impishly amusing husband-wife farce.

The drama, Armand Salacrou's "Les Nuits de la Colere," is a starkly set, crisply staged thriller about underground plotting during the German occupation of France. In a sense it is over a moment after the curtain rises, for the three men present on the stage are immediately shot dead.

The dead, however, continue to talk to each other, and they try to figure out what all the shooting was for. Had Jean Desailly betrayed Barrault, an underground worker, to Gabriel Cattand, a collaborationist?

Swift and Adroit

Soon the living come in the play—the wives of two of the men and some friends in the Resistance movement. Author Salacrou's maneuvering of time, place and existence itself is swift and adroit, and the players manage full-bodied impersonations in a minimum of time. The plotting, the writing and the acting have a directness and economy which cannot often be found on the English-speaking stage.

Last evening was Mlle. Renaud's, for she played incisively and dramatically in the first section of the bill and hilariously in the second.

The farce, by Georges Feydeau, is "Feu La Mere de Madame." It is a four-character bedroom sketch acted by four highly accomplished comedians. Abed, Mlle. Renaud is awakened at 3 A. M. by her husband, Pierre Bertin, who has been to the Quatz Arts ball in the costume of Louis XIV. He makes the mistake of speaking admiringly of a nude girl he saw at the ball, and Mlle. Renaud's fury begins.

Mama Love Papa?

This is very funny husband-wife stuff, in which the wife demands if the model's bosom was any better than her own—and she presents her own for her husband's consideration. When the squabble has just about run its course a funereal-looking gent—Beauchamp, who looks like a combination of Boris Karloff and Buster Keaton—arrives to announce that Mlle. Renaud's mother has died. Happily for the sketch but unhappily for the son-in-law, this news turns out to be false.

Bertin is very funny as the stuffy, unimaginative fellow who has been to the ball in an elaborate costume. Mlle. Renaud is the distillation of all indignant wives as she stomps barefoot about the bedroom. Beauchamp, a superb pantomimist, is continuously amusing as the bringer of bad news, and Francoise Ledoux is an excellent caricature of a stupid maid with a foreign accent.

This program will be offered through Wednesday evening.

The New York Times
February 12, 1957

Theatre: A Story of the Resistance

'Nights of Fury' Part of French Twin Bill

By MILTON BRACKER

MOST American adults have some idea of what the French were going through in 1944. Prior to last night there had already been two plays this season stemming from the World War II underground; one, "The Hidden River," survives. But it is nonetheless relatively true that a drama about the Résistance—by a Frenchman, and wholly about Frenchmen—comes before a 1957 audience on Broadway, as Armand Salacrou puts it, "toute nue," that is, nakedly exposed on its own merits.

Since M. Salacrou is the author of "Nights of Fury," presented by the Renaud-Barrault troupe at the Winter Garden, it is, of course, his own work that must withstand such exposure. That it does—and may continue to, before future audiences—is a tribute to both play and performance.

In fact, what difficulty there is suggests not so much a lack of audience contact with the subject as a surfeit with it. Serious plays and novels apart, both the movies and television have minted in the World War II occupation of France a standard coin: on one face, betrayal; on the other, heroism. M. Salacrou's work, first produced in 1946, and done experimentally here in English in November, 1947, inevitably risks confusion with this product.

But if many of the popular versions have been spurious, "Nights of Fury" is palpably the real thing. There is betrayal and heroism in Salacrou, too, but the proportions are subtler. Nothing is served up in neat blacks and whites.

•

The story is simple enough. In 1944, a Résistance fighter injured in the course of blowing up a train seeks haven with an old friend and his wife. More out of fear than treachery, more annoyed at the threat to their own security than in any awareness of the larger issues swirling around them, the couple (the initiative is the wife's) turn him in. The wounded man is eventually blinded and condemned. The husband who let him down, and the collaborationist who arrested him, both die in the limitlessly widening circle of the incident.

Salacrou relies on repeated flashbacks, mortared together by artful lighting. As the major part of a double bill, the play was stark and at times static; uncomfortable and uncompromising; a forced glance at the too-recent past, at a time when clashing concepts of "freedom" and "occupation" plague both the Communists in Hungary and the French themselves in Algeria.

As Jean, the patriot, Jean-Louis Barrault is touching and eloquent; he projects blindness with stunning persuasion; he moves a hand lightly and communicates all the terror and impatience of a saboteur waiting for the selected train. As the friend's wife, Madeleine Renaud is cynical, shallow, and curiously honest. She is sure that she is acting only in defense of her sleeping children, that any other mother would do the same.

But it remains for Jean Desailly, as the husband, Bernard, to impale himself on inner torture and to speak wrenchingly the words that sum up the anguish of them all. He has betrayed no one, Bernard pleads to Louise, Jean's outraged widow-to-be, but "j'ai vécu dans une époque terriblement difficile à vivre." The two-word title of a memorable wartime story in The New Yorker provides a perfect translation: "Poor Everybody."

•

The finale was the nearly half-century-old comedy, "Feu La Mère de Madame," by Georges Feydeau. To start with, it deals with the impact on a wife awakened at 4 A. M. of her husband's praise of the figure of a model he has just seen at a ball. The situation is timeless and the interpretation hilarious.

Pierre Bertin and Mlle. Renaud, in the leads, were fine; but in the lesser role of a muddled manservant, Beauchamp was wonderful. This tall, grave comedian, with an amiable resemblance to Boris Karloff, brings in a false report that the wife's mother has just died. In the course of the complications, he almost carries off the evening.

The new plays naturally complemented each other. And together, they raise an interesting question. Will the resistance theme be as valid in half a century as that of a man and wife in a universally understandable domestic mix-up? In any event, the double bill will continue through tomorrow night. Jean Giraudoux' "Intermezzo" starts Thursday.